Design Sense
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When Should a Package be Changed?

Innovation begets innovation. Aerosols spawned new categories of convenience products—like car wax—never thought to be sprayable.

Marketing men know the difficulty of making decisions about a new package design. The more seasoned executive appreciates that changing an existing package is no easier. New or old, both packages have the same marketing importance. And each presents the marketer with special difficulties calling for the use of somewhat different skills.

Introducing a change in an existing package carries a separate responsibility. The familiarity of the consumer with an existing design is an established reality that can hardly be ignored, with changes best marked by "proceed with caution" signals. Successful marketers never try to "beat the light" with spur of the moment solutions.

One might think that packaging changes are only undertaken when a product is in trouble. Not so. It may be true of *some* products at *some* point in their life cycle but most often changes are undertaken for other reasons. Let's look at some of these, bearing in mind that a brand may, ostensibly at least, already be effectively packaged. What conditions call for a change? Here are eight typical reasons, any one of which demands that the marketer take a new hard look at his packaging.

When Consumer Attitudes Create an Opportunity

To his surprise, a manufacturer may learn that the consumer favors his product for reasons other than those that he promotes most actively. If the consumer's attitudes are strong enough, the manufacturer will prudently go along, shifting his marketing tactics and revamping the package to go along with the shift.

The experienced marketer therefore finds it necessary to evaluate the position of his brand as well as his future strategy. He needs to know the significant qualities of the brand that affect the largest audience. It behooves him to stress such qualities and play down the less significant. This is not as simple as it seems in the telling, as many marketers have learned to their sorrow. For repositioning a product requires a combination of actions with packaging playing a significant role.

Thus, for example, when consumer tastes in alcoholic beverages were found to change from the heavier tasting whiskies to the lighter, Scotch emerged as the most desirable, with lighter scotches preferred to the stronger tasting. In answer to this change in taste, the "soft" rye whiskey was created. Another example is the shifting consumer tastes in cigarettes. The preference for filters and mentholated types forced tobacco companies to produce them under the old established brand names. In the food field, the consumer once chose between regular and dietary products. After the preference for dietary foods was established, the producer was forced to offer the consumer something more. Thus, the taste of the product became a prime factor in this category.

To Meet and Beat Competitive Action

Ordinarily, how competition moves should not of itself dictate a firm's packaging position. In some cases, however, a brand can find itself at a distinct disadvantage and remedial action must be taken.

Salad dressings present a case in point. The Kraft line was displayed in cylindrical bottles; the Wishbone line, on the other hand, appeared in a wide-bottom flask. Although both brands held approximately the same amount of dressing, Wishbone's flask looked like more and got more space on the shelf than Kraft. Kraft met the competition head on with a bottle modification that not only evened the score but put its own brand ahead by adding gourmet excitement to the product in the home.

To Innovate Through Physical Packaging

Sometimes new materials dictate a change because they are able to do the same packaging job cheaper. All else being equal, a marketer who would not change under these circumstances doesn't belong in marketing. But often he is unaware of cost-saving possibilities inherent in new materials. This is perhaps the best reason for establishing packaging audits and regularly reviewing what *is* being done in light of what *might* be done.

More often though, physical packaging innovations mean an increase in costs and therefore demand careful study of how new packaging will affect sales. Will the innovation contribute anything to the sales-worthiness of the product? Can possible sales increases more than equal the added production costs?

It's hard to believe now but, at one time, the decision to put shave cream in an aerosol can was as chancey as a new product introduction. Yet today, aerosol-type shave creams claim more than 80 per cent of the market. And through their by-product of convenience, aerosol dispensers have spawned whole new categories of products—many of which were always sprayed (insecticides) but many of which were never considered to be spray products (laundry starch and car wax).

With changing styles in graphics, familiar packages become tired-looking and must be modernized—but without the buyer knowing it.

Physical packaging changes do not have to be monumental ones. Even a small new feature can make a considerable contribution to a product's share of market. It could be a simple new closure on a pill bottle or a zip-top opener on a cereal pack. Such was the case with Keebler's Zesta Saltine brand and its "easy open Crisp-Lock Top." This closure was heralded on the package with a special yellow and red banner, plus the statement that Zesta is "the only saltine guaranteed to stay fresh." Little things can impinge firmly on the shoppers consciousness. And little things can make large differences in sales.

To Exploit a Reformulated Product

Consider the case in which a laboratory develops a formula to increase a detergent's strength, to create a fluffier biscuit, to give more vitamins or minerals per ounce of cereal. Of the many options the marketer has, two stand out. Either he can create an entirely new brand with all the costs that attend its introduction—or, he can maintain the existing brand and tell and sell the prospect on the new formulation on a revised version of the current package. The latter course is simpler, less costly and is often the one followed, with a major redesign unnecessary.

When Advertising Forces a Modification

Changing a package to conform to an advertising concept is generally dangerous; it puts the cart before the horse. If the campaign falls flat, the package perforce falls with it. Even after the most careful study, such a move is risky in the extreme.

Exceptions occur, however, wherein the product benefits by having the ad rub-off on the package. Nescafe's "43 beans in every cup" was so effective it became a part of the brand imagery, and it was decided to keep the slogan on the package until a totally new campaign idea might replace it. Some of Ajax's White Tornado imagery might have strengthened the brand's position at the point-of-sale. Indeed, the firm might have moved to the extreme position of marketing another brand with the name "White Tornado Cleanser."

When Graphic Fatigue Sets In

The public is constantly exposed to good design in myriad forms. Almost without being aware of it, the public's taste is being changed and elevated. All communications media that seek attention by dazzling the eye contribute to the process, and packaging is not excluded. A package design that doesn't keep pace with trends in graphics often tends to look tired and stodgy. And a stodgy-looking package can find itself in trouble and vulnerable to the inroads of competitors who do keep pace with the trend.

The entire subject of graphic "fatigue" is rather subtle but, as a condition for change, it is no less important than others. The change itself can be subtle, too. Campbell's is a good example of a firm that is aware of the need for change and maintains a position of leadership in this and other ways. Significantly, the changes in its graphics are almost unnoticed by the public at large. To the practiced eye, however, its logotype is seen to be less condensed and less ornate. And although it is more contemporary than heretofore, the strong Campbell identity remains intact.

To Meet Changes in Retail Environment

The methods of presenting a product at the point-of-sale are subject to change. An item ordinarily displayed at eye-level, for example, may be found to sell better closer to the floor, or vice versa. Adult snack items should do better at the five foot level. But a new cereal product, heavily advertised on children's TV shows, had better be at the three foot level where the sand-lot set can lay hands on it and stuff it into mother's shopping cart. If your product most often lands on the bottom shelf, or suffers from private label priority positioning, take another look at your package. It may have to be redesigned so that every panel will do a harder selling job.

To Benefit from Home Use

Do you know how your product is used in the home? Could the ultimate use have any contribution to make to the way your product is packaged? Some marketers may think this an idle question. Yet they sometimes overlook the obvious.

Consider decorative candles for festive occasions. For many years, they were bulk-packaged for the retailer who would then sell them in pairs. Several years ago, Emory Industries saw virtue in packaging them protectively, two to a carton. After all, the customer bought them in pairs and used them in pairs. In the first year of the packaging change, Emory's sales doubled, tripled and then sextupled. Its competitive advantage was short-lived, but hearteningly profitable. Within a year, every manufacturer had copied this packaging technique. And everyone puzzled over the fact that they had overlooked a very obvious packaging formula for such a long time.

Area to look into for future benefits: the home freezer market and its special packaging requirements.

In Summary

The eight conditions for making a packaging change were said at the outset to be "typical." The above treatment then should not be considered an exhaustive one. Other conditions may occur to the reader. Good. If this material has served to jog the reader's imagination and caused him to restudy the subject, it has served its purpose.

Now, let us consider the other side of the coin; the various reasons for not changing a package.

When to Say "No" to Packaging Changes

Treat a brand with reverence. Packaging changes may cause loyal buyers to view the product itself as different, not their brand.

A decision to stay with one's present package—not to change—must be as carefully reasoned as the decision to make a change. Any move must be rooted in the realities of the marketplace as well as the many intangibles that adhere to a product throughout its life span. In the minds of less experienced marketers, change for its own sake has certain attractions. But to regard change as the vital pulse of product movement is the height of folly. A marketer should be no more committed to change than he is to packaging permanence.

What are the factors that argue most urgently for remaining with an existing package? Why should a brand stay with the status quo? Surely the reader has his own ideas. But some of the following may not have occured to him.

Don't Change Simply to Satisfy a New Brand Manager's Desire to Innovate

The appearance of a new brand manager generally signals activity of all kinds. Research is undertaken; goals are redefined. Understandably, the new brand manager has a desire to push upward to new sales goals. Marketing aggressiveness is built into his character or he wouldn't have landed in that important position. But in order to reach new marketing heights, he may feel a need to make a recognizable change in the product and be sorely tempted to focus on the packaging. A needless change might result. Of all the reasons for *not* changing a package, this one stands foremost.

This is not to say that the package is always right. The new brand manager may indeed have placed his finger on a genuine sales deterrent. But he must be sure that he isn't changing the package for reasons of self gratification or for the sake of change itself.

Don't Change in Imitation of Competition

In all product categories, marketers keep themselves keenly attuned to moves made by the competition. Moves in new packaging —with their high visibility—are like the bell sounding for Round One in the ear of a fighter. The desire to move into combat is almost irrepressible. A competitor's change in packaging is always unsettling. It causes a marketer to wonder what his competitor may have learned about moving a product that he himself has failed to learn. When competition changes a package, a marketer must assume that the move is a carefully reasoned one. But it may not be a wise move. To follow slavishly after, therefore, is patently *not* a carefully reasoned move. Almost without exception, it is unwise —ignoring as it does every worthwhile standard or guide that is readily available to a marketer.

Don't Change for a Physical Packaging Innovation Alone

New concepts in physical packaging can be exciting—almost to the point where one can lose sight of the ultimate sales goal and the most direct way of reaching it. The sturdy success of plastic skin-packaging in some product lines—with its display and point-of-sale promotion possibilities—can quicken the sales expectations of those in other product groups. But even if skin-packs make lots of sense for small items in such lines as hardware and toys, they could be all wrong for soft goods like sweaters or skirts. The wise marketer will therefore be wary of forcing a product into a particular type of package, or designing his product out of its area of product believability. The change might confuse or alienate consumers, and even cause the product to be moved to an inappropriate section of the supermarket. If in doubt, the judicious approach might be to introduce a completely new version of a product in the new package—while retaining the old.

Don't Change for So-called "Upgrading"

There are broad classes of products the physical appearance of which causes some designers to feel mildly ill. Their artistic sensibilities are offended by crass design and vulgar color. But the package's design may clearly say "I'm a bargain" to the price conscious customer. In such a case, a change to a more aesthetically-pleasing package may lose the product's main audience and reduce sales. This is not to say that design quality rises or falls with the price of a product. Good design does not equate with high priced products. To put it another way, there is good "bargain" design and bad "bargain" design. The designer has to understand the difference.

Detergent packaging, for another example, is active-looking. It says to the customer "I'm a bold, alive, broad-shouldered product; I dig into your wash and I pull dirt out." A detergent that went to market with a less active look might satisfy the artistic sensibilities of some designers but its sales capability would be greatly limited.

Don't Change When Product/Package Identification Is Strong

Some products are so strongly identified in the customer's mind with a specific physical package that change endangers sales. With rare exceptions, aerosols are identified with non-edibles. This identification gains strength from the fact that many aerosol products are toxic—bug sprays, some

Conventions in packaging must be honored. Instant coffees are thought of as "jarred" products which, if put in cans, don't sell.

polishes, germicides. The time may come when more food products are aerosol-packaged. Until it does, this non-food identification is hard to beat.

Less dramatic physical packaging changes fall under this same influence. Instant coffees, for example, are "jarred" products; the consumer generally won't accept them in cans. The Chock Full O'Nuts brand in the northeastern U.S. learned this to its sorrow not long ago.

Don't Change If Your Brand Will Suffer

Any change of the elements in a package which project the brand must be approached with great care. In fact, with something close to reverence. All effort should be directed toward preserving the equities that have been building for the brand since its beginning. Any change in appearance that tends to rob it of impact or consumer loyalty must be avoided or carefully considered.

This is not to say that those less significant elements cannot more easily give way. General Mills appreciated this delicate balance when packaging changes in its Wheaties brand were undertaken back in 1957. The rather extensive redesign therefore aimed only at making the package "more Wheaties" than it was before.

Don't Change If the Product's Authenticity Will be Weakened

The appearance of a package constantly builds up a specific image in the consumer's mind. Eventually, the image becomes so strong that the package actually becomes an extension of the product. Any packaging change can therefore be regarded by the consumer as a change in the product. And he can reject it on this ground.

A classic example of this authenticity factor is the personality created by R. J. Reynolds for its Camel brand. Like all other regular size cigarette brands, Camel had felt the competitive inroads made by filters and longer sizes. Its market share was slipping and it decided to take preventive action by contemporizing the package. But in revamping the graphics, the "taste" of the product appeared changed for many consumers. Camel quickly moved back to its traditional package and apologized in full-page ads. This principle does not apply when a major change in the product is effected. Thus, in going to a long-size filter product, Camel could appear in a radically different pack, which it did.

Don't Change Out of Sheer Frustration

There comes a time in the life of most products when they reach a sales plateau. Market movement, although good, appears static. Projected goals aren't met. The reasons for this condition do not easily come to light. The blame may belong with a flabby sales organization, with a change in consumer tastes, with ineffective advertising, or a dozen other factors.

At such times, a marketer's frustration may cause him to turn on the package and makes it the whipping boy. "Max was right ...that package is dragging its anchor!" "No wonder we can't move it...we've got the wrong message on the box!" These are signs of a frustration that is best held in check. If a marketer gives in to them, he may find the product moving off the plateau ...in the wrong direction. Nervous changes only aggravate the situation, sowing confusion among consumers.

* * * * * *

Thus, the case for the status quo . . . when to say "no" to packaging changes.

The reasons given for changing and not changing a package should be ample evidence that packaging decisions should be soundly managed and that packaging management should be carefully structured to preclude marketing mishaps. Packaging management is assuredly not a simple discipline; neither is it an impossible one.

On the following pages, the reader can explore the application of sound packaging management to actual case histories.

"Why They Changed" A Portfolio of Case Histories

The Product: Nutrament—from Mead Johnson.

The Motivation: Unlike this firm's Metrecal, Nutrament is formulated to add weight. But like Metrecal, distribution was limited to drug stores and promotion was limited to certain markets. When the decision was made to broaden the market, new packaging was held to be essential.

The Change: A less medical, more dynamic looking package was an important criterion. The design had to suggest quick energy. The logo was made stronger, heftier, in the form of a bold military slash that also creates a staccato effect on the shelf. The design conveys a feeling of action, and suggests that the athlete will run faster after taking Nutrament and that the older person will feel young again. Two reds were used for cherry, two browns for chocolate, etc., intensifying the energy and flavor messages.

The Product: Keepers—paper bag products from Union Camp Paper Co.

The Motivation: The marketing of different types of paper bags—sandwich bags, garbage bags, etc.—was haphazard at best. And the packaging of these paper products was either primitive or rudimentary. Yet sales showed them to be a needed and wanted product.

The Change: The packaging of these paper products was an act of turning a commodity into a brand. Name development was basic to the problem. From the hundreds of name candidates developed by Lippincott & Margulies, "Keepers" was selected. "Keepers" was an exciting choice since it could successfully bridge various paper bag products from garbage bags to sandwich bags. Applied to garbage bags, it suggests strength to hold the contents when they are disposed; applied to sandwich bags, it suggests the maintenance of freshness. Health and freshness are also conveyed by the floral sunburst motif. This device serves the brand as a color-coded element identifying the different types of bag (lunch, sandwich, garbage, trash). But the device in four colors—orange, blue, green and magenta—also produces a powerful effect in mass display at the point-of-sale. It thus lends importance to what had been considered the lowly, anonymous paper bag.

The Product: Brioschi

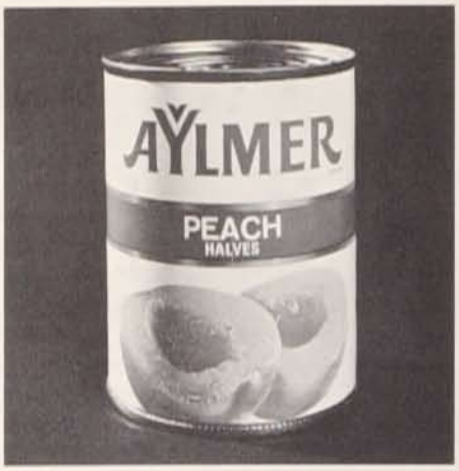
The Motivation: This product was well-known for its quality and effectiveness as an antacid aid to digestion—but mostly so among a relatively small ethnic group. The manufacturer decided to reposition the product and seek the same good reception in all markets.

The Change: The old package was elegant, "old world" and compelling to first generation Italian buyers. These strong virtues were also its limitations. The design platform called for a complete redesign using only the unique Brioschi name as a memory link to the past. The glass container was totally new... a deep-blue bottle that protected the product and conveyed the semi-ethical-drug character of the product. Additionally, the graphics and typography were redesigned to appeal to the mass market of U.S. consumers. The immediate upturn in sales confirmed the validity of the decision.

The Product: Lady Scott tissue line from Scott Paper Company

The Motivation: Lady Scott tissues were created to broaden the Scott line and aimed at a specific segment of the market for bathroom and facial tissues. Lady Scott was to be top-of-the-line, a high quality product for discriminating consumers. In part, the ability to print on tissue was responsible for the creation of the product. The tissues themselves are very attractive with a floral pattern in several colors.

The Change: Unlike other packaged goods which rest on a closet or pantry shelf, the tissue package is generally left out and is highly visible. As such, it becomes part of a home's furnishings. For this reason, Lady Scott tissues are marketed in a box that not only has good display value in the store but also makes a handsome dispenser in the home. Most of the graphics are printed on a cellophane sleeve and are removable. The housewife doesn't see an advertising message when she reaches for a tissue; she sees an attractive container which is embellished with an embossed ornament. The dominant colors of the boxes —fern green, antique gold, camellia pink, bluebell blue—are off the normal color palette in this category, and are color-coordinated with popular new decorator hues. As such, they are able to complement different bath or boudoir colors. Finally, the Lady Scott logotype is designed to have an elegant and feminine quality, completely in keeping with the rest of the design and with the market position predetermined for the product.



The Product: Aylmer—canned food line from Canadian Canners Ltd.

The Motivation: Amid the "visual noise" that fights for the shopper's attention, packages without a definable personality find themselves at a distinct disadvantage. Aylmer's line was typical of this problem. The label used on its broad line of tinned products was generally bland. Additionally, no strong relationship existed from product to product. Several different logotypes and 17 different labels were in use. The name appeared as red on white on one product, white on red on another. It appeared horizontally, vertically and in script. And almost every label had its own type style to describe the contents. The labels conveyed anything but a vivid impression of a modern aggressive company.

The Change: In spite of obvious faults, the Aylmer name had built strong equities for itself with a line of outstanding products. The new label retains the name as a strong, bold logotype, uniformly against a white background. The letter "Y" was made larger than the rest to create a unique point of identification and a leafy sprig set inside the letterform further underscored that fact. The most distinctive feature, however, was the red band that runs around the middle of the label. This simple but vital element helped to form a family of products relationship, enabling the individual products to give each other support. Moreover, the red band became a strong copy concept in Aylmer advertising, linking it with Aylmer packaging ("Look for the red band...your promise of quality" and "Watch for the brand with the new red band").

The Product: Sanka Coffee —from General Foods

The Motivation: Sanka was the second largest selling "instant" product. When new competition emerged, it threatened Sanka's market shares, as it did those of the leading brand. But research showed Sanka to be especially vulnerable due to its special decaffeinated nature. Although flavor tests among consumers showed Sanka to be the equal in coffee-flavor of brands that left the caffein in, its popular image to the younger consumer was of a less-than-coffee product. Sanka decided that it needed a "coffee-er" look to offset that image. But it had to retain the loyal public for its decaffeinated product.

The Change: The glass container was kept without change. On the label, however, the word "coffee" was given more prominence to make the brand statement read "Sanka Coffee" instead of the simpler "Sanka". The Arab figure used in the label design was dropped entirely in favor of the coffee cup. In every way, the label aimed at saying, "Coffee . . . coffee . . . coffee". At the same time, the "decaffeinated" statement, though made smaller, was retained as a hedge against losing the loyal users.

The Product: Wheaties—breakfast food from General Mills

The Motivation: The breakfast food category is characterized by constant innovation and change. New brands appear in a seemingly endless parade. But despite the blandishments of new competition for market shares, Wheaties successfully maintained its position as an all-family cereal. Even so, its package was suffering from graphic fatigue; it had begun to look old-fashioned alongside the lively newcomers. The focus of the change therefore was to contemporize without losing any of the strong equities that made the brand a perennially strong seller.

The Change: The changes made were extensive but a strong effort was made to make the package "more Wheaties" than ever before. The red-orange color was deepened. The sports imagery ("Breakfast of Champions") was intensified by using actual sports figures. These illustrated sports figures were changed for different size packages and for the different seasons. The megaphone-shaped logotype was also modified somewhat to make it stronger. The General Mills "G" was allowed to intrude somewhat to give the brand the benefit of strong corporate endorsement.

The Product: Metrecal Cookies—a dietary food product from Mead Johnson.

The Motivation: This dietary food, low in calories and high in vitamin and mineral content, had been sold primarily through drug stores and pharmacies. The firm decided to broaden the marketing base through supermarket distribution and sale. To do so, the product had to be repositioned through reformulation of the product itself and a change in packaging.

The Change: The new posture for the product dictated a change in the generic description from "wafer" to "cookie" or, in other words, from a food that was close to being an ethical drug product to a specialty food product. The new graphics of the package were called upon to do a two-fold job:
1) stress appetite appeal, since the cookie formula was changed to make the product better-tasting, and,
2) convey the idea of a controlled diet. Thus, the graphics have a controlled look, as distinguished from the "fun through eating" appearance of ordinary cookie and pastry products. Yet the product was pictured on the package face in order to communicate appetite appeal.

The package also suggests the dietary factor through a tall and slender "stand up" package rather than a short squat configuration. A relationship with the primary member of Mead Johnson's family of dietary products—Metrecal Liquid—was deemed important. Therefore, the goblet shape which is a strong design element of the liquid Metrecal was modified to become a contemporary "cookie jar."

The Product: Sylvania Light Bulbs

The Motivation: Before Sylvania decided to challenge its competition, the market belonged to three companies—General Electric, Westinghouse, and running a poor third, Sylvania. All used roughly the same kind of packaging and, in use, one product was almost indistinguishable from the other. Research showed that the product of all three manufacturers presented an inventory problem to the retailer and a purchasing problem to the consumer since bulbs were often sold out of bins and frequently intermixed. The retailer had trouble classifying them and the consumer had trouble selecting the wattage he wanted.

The Change: Here was a classic case of the importance of making vital information available on the package. The lightweight corrugated sleeve was retained, but a color-coded two-pack system with strong graphic elements was created to accent the wattage sizes. This totally new concept permitted the dealer and consumer to tell the power capacity of the bulb at a glance. Stock could be inventoried with minimum effort. It also stacked well and lent itself to special point-of-sale promotion. The stimulus to Sylvania's sales was immediate with Westinghouse forced to redo its packaging within six months.

The Product: American Tobacco Company's Tareyton brand.

The Motivation: Competitive brands, following American Tobacco's Pall Mall, went to market with a new, longer product—the 100 millimeter cigarette. The concept gained immediate acceptance, causing Tareyton to take a new look at the market and explore the possibility of producing a 100 mm. size of its own.

The Change: The cigarette pack had to meet rigid requirements. It needed to retain the valuable equity successfully built by Tareyton. It had to be immediately recognizable as a Tareyton brand but, at the same time, convey the distinctiveness of the new longer size. The double red band suggesting Tareyton's dual filter, a strong design element in the regular pack, was retained. So was the type treatment of the logotype. But the decision was made to run the logotype on its side, a bold decision in view of the fact that this ran counter to tradition in cigarette packaging. But the name was kept easily readable and highly legible in spite of its unusual handling. And the treatment underscored the longer length of the product. Now completing a successful performance in test markets, Tareyton is being readied for national distribution.

The Product: Nescafé Coffee
—from The Nestlé Company

The Motivation: The Nestlé Company had developed a new formula that produced a darker granule instant coffee, which when prepared, had a distinctly richer, brewed flavor. It was decided that the formula change should be reflected in a package that conveyed the new product qualities to the consumer.

The Change: Lippincott & Margulies had created the carafe configuration for Nescafé in an earlier design program. This strong identification was retained to some degree in the new imagery. The bottom third of the bottle, however, was changed to show "small windows" in the ribbed area so that the new product color and granule could be easily seen. The logotype was redesigned to employ a bolder, stronger letterform reflecting the product's new robustness. Gold was added in full measure to the rich mixture of red and deep brown to further emphasize the copy line: "New Natural Flavor."

The Product: Hormel Food Products

The Motivation: Lippincott & Margulies research showed conclusively that Hormel's public image was vastly different from Hormel in fact. The firm produced several hundred different food products; the public believed it produced no more than six. The reason? The family of products showed a negligible family relationship. Furthermore, the Hormel logotype and package design did not convey the feeling of a large, modern, forward-looking company.

The Change: To the public, the Hormel packaging *was* the Hormel corporation. And since the "family" relationship between the many products of the firm was but dimly perceived, so too was the corporation. A strong corporate graphic statement was needed to permit the entire family of products to reinforce each other through mutual endorsement. The focal point of the system was a new Hormel logotype, employing a new alphabet, created as part of the corporate communications/packaging system. Its design retained the friendliness and believability values of the old, while adding crispness and uniqueness with a modern flourish. To set the stage for Hormel's growth as a food company, the new logotype was combined with stylized parsley sprigs connoting "fine food plus freshness." The modular elements also permitted the creation of a color-coded identification system for three product groupings within the complete product line. Thus, the vital family resemblance was maintained while helping the customer and the retailer to differentiate between similar type Hormel products.

Who Should Make Your Packaging Decisions?

The question raised in the headline will become more meaningful to the reader if he will first consider for just a moment who it is who now makes his packaging decisions. For that purpose, here is a list of possibilities. Simply check off as many as necessary.

- ☐ COMPANY PRESIDENT
- ☐ ADVERTISING MANAGER
- ☐ PROMOTION DIRECTOR
- ☐ BRAND MANAGER
- ☐ PRODUCTION ENGINEER
- ☐ OUTSIDE CONSULTANT
- ☐ TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
- ☐ PACKAGING ENGINEER
- ☐ ART DIRECTOR
- ☐ DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
- ☐ CHAIRMAN OF BOARD
- ☐ PURCHASING DIRECTOR
- ☐ LEGAL DEPARTMENT
- ☐ PACKAGING MANAGER
- ☐ ADVERTISING AGENCY
- ☐ DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH
- ☐ PLANT MANAGER
- ☐ PROJECT ENGINEER
- ☐ NEW PRODUCT DIRECTOR
- ☐ MARKET SPECIALIST
- ☐ SALES DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
- ☐ CUSTOMER RESEARCH MANAGER
- ☐ SUPPLIER OF PACKAGING MATERIALS
- ☐ MARKETING DIRECTOR
- ☐ CORPORATE DESIGN DIRECTOR
- ☐ PACKAGING GROUP LEADER
- ☐ PACKAGING COORDINATOR
- ☐ MATERIALS SUPERVISOR
- ☐ SALES COORDINATOR
- ☐ OTHER_____

All of the above have been known to make packaging decisions in one company or another. And the length of the list should make clear to everyone that packaging today is no simple exercise. Indeed, the complexity of packaging has grown apace with its marketing importance.

To place executive decision making into the perspective of packaging, imagine a classified ad in which U.S. business and industry cry out for a tough-minded someone to cope with the perennial crises that packaging poses. It might read as follows:

Packaging Help Wanted!

Seek genius to make perfect decisions on approximately $30-billion worth of packaging. This challenging post also directly affects the sale of over two hundred billion dollars worth of consumer merchandise. To qualify, the applicant must have a complete and comprehensive knowledge of marketing, corporate communications, packaging engineering and production (including cost analysis and scheduling), art direction and design expertise, advertising and promotion, corporate finance, law and government regulation (with particular emphasis on packaging standards established by the Federal Trade Commission and Food & Drug Administration), research and new product planning. Ideally, he will have at least ten years experience as a senior marketing executive with a major manufacturer who produces a dozen different brands of consumer goods. An understanding of consumer buying psychology and shifting tastes is also desirable. Anyone with these qualities and capabilities will be well rewarded. End of ad.

Obviously, few if any persons qualify. The person who did would have to combine the best qualities of the faculties of the Harvard Business School and Art Students League, plus a dash each of David Merrick and Captain Marvel. What then can business do? Who should make packaging decisions? In the absence of the omnipotent ideal, on whom will this all-important question devolve?

Let us examine today's packaging function and consider the scope of packaging management. We will see that the skills needed to make decisions today are quite different from those required fifteen, ten, and even five years ago. In assaying the types of skills needed, we may be able to discover the type of person or persons qualified to perform them. Industry cannot afford the wrong type of decision-maker; the road back from a wrong decision is long and arduous.

Packaging as Engineering

Physical packaging offers today's marketer an incredible new variety of materials to use. In plastics alone, the innovations tax the abilities of packagers to keep abreast of things and fully explore the possibilities. And plastics by no means rule out the unexplored uses of paper, metal and glass—and combinations of new and traditional materials, viz; paper with plastic, paper with foil, etc. Without question, the future will offer even greater variety since technological innovation tends to accelerate.

Physical packaging thus challenges marketers to a higher degree than at any time in history. And the packaging decision-maker must relate the technological advances to the marketing needs. A broad understanding of both is required. Is this fact well understood? Moderately so. One cannot readily say that today's packaging—for all of the innovations we see

—could not be even more advanced than it is if more of the right talents were employed.

Why hasn't progress been faster? It could be that packaging management hasn't sufficient awareness of the marketing implications of the physical side of packaging. It may be focusing on other aspects of the problem. It may not have time to become strongly involved in physical packaging. It may be too cautious. Or it may be that packaging isn't being properly managed if, indeed, it is being managed at all.

Inevitably, our aggressive and buoyant technology will force changes. Technology will demand more knowledge, greater expertise. One thing is clear: the producer of goods will have to come to grips with the packaging problems much earlier in the development of a new product. The two—package and product—will have to be researched and developed concurrently by those who understand both engineering and marketing.

Packaging as a Sociological Factor

People cluster; gregariousness is almost as instinctive for man as sex and self-preservation. As a result, we face the possibility in 2,000 AD of a U.S. population reaching 312 million, of which more than 60 per cent will occupy less than 8 per cent of the country's land area.

Will this clustering instinct affect packaging? In today's large cities, waste disposal—of which packaging is a large part—is already a problem. By the year 2,000, this may be solved by dramatic new packaging materials. Perhaps they will be highly collapsible and capable of reduction to a mere pellet of waste. Or they may become—in combination with a special chemical—soluble enough to be washed down the drain. They may even be created of a protein material—like fish meal—that can be disposed of by human or animal consumption.

That's not to say that we must wait for the year 2,000 for packaging to emerge as a sociological factor. In the past, it has involved itself as a veritable possession of the individual. Over a period of two or more generations, successful brands have developed a "member-of-the-family" feeling, deep-rooted in the individual consciousness and highly meaningful as a marketing factor. Today, the "grand old brand" feeling still motivates the shopper despite the fact that the product may have been on the shelf for only a short time. Products can become members-of-the-family even though their shelf longevity is under a year—as in the case of cosmetic products—or for more than five years—as with some automotive products.

After brand imagery the sociological factor that most typifies today's consumer is the one that offers convenience of product use and confers a by-product of "free" time. In many ways, ours is an Age of Convenience. Rugs are shampooed without taking them up. Starch is sprayed. Various sprays hold hair in place, reduce underarm perspiration, paint household things. Wax-cleaners are foamed on vinyl floors. Toothbrushing is electromechanical. And less time is spent over hot stoves due to boil-in bags and heat-and-serve meals. How do we spend the time thus saved? It's impossible to say. Who can estimate, for example, how much such leisure pursuits as golf or boating or what-you-will may owe their growth to the boil-in bag?

Packaging systems, in which the branded product and package are inseparable, convenient and time-saving, are increasingly important in consumer buying decisions. And the companies that will make self-rewarding contributions in the future are those who will include in their package planning some recognition of this fact.

Packaging and the Law

New laws are often difficult to write into the code that guides the affairs of men; they are even more difficult to repeal. So, short of a revolution or other political cataclysm, the trend of consumer "protectionism" that has given the federal government a special cast in recent years will continue. And it will strongly affect the shape and mode of tomorrow's packaging.

The latest manifestation of the government's posture was, of course, the "Fair Packaging and Labeling Act of 1966." The Act set forth specific guidelines for labeling contents on packages, proclaimed certain minor practices illegal, and established new regulatory powers for the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). How far-reaching these regulatory powers will be remains to be seen. But U.S. business and industry have new cause to study carefully how their packaging stands in the light of the new law. And they have new reason to study packaging management, for the classic legal position is ultra-safe to the point of unnecessarily deterring sales, while in contrast, the super-salesman may be all too prone to turn his back on the law and inadvertently embarrass the entire industry.

Packaging as a Budget Factor

U.S. business and industry are spending upwards of $30-billions annually for packaging. This represents about eight per cent of the total value of all goods

produced. While the purchase of packaging materials, machinery or services comes under the close scrutiny of the accounting department, purchasing agent and that echelon concerned with fiscal affairs, financial experts have a limited understanding of packaging subtleties and the response to them in the marketplace.

They should know, first of all, that packaging has assumed a stronger role as a marketing weapon – the result of sharpening competition. And management perforce spends more for the packaging function. But there is no clear evidence that the billions being spent are managed – structured, measured, controlled – to improve the effectiveness of the expenditure. Other aspects of marketing have been value-analyzed fore and aft – but not packaging. Nor is packaging audited the way other aspects of a business are. For a comptroller to monitor the fiscal health of a company without regular and frequent audits is unthinkable. Why then – considering the increasing importance of packaging as a marketing and communications function – is not packaging audited accordingly?: 1) to evaluate effectiveness or lack of same, 2) to consider the pros and cons of new directions, 3) to probe for ways of saving packaging dollars – a particularly important consideration for multi-brand, multi-product corporations.

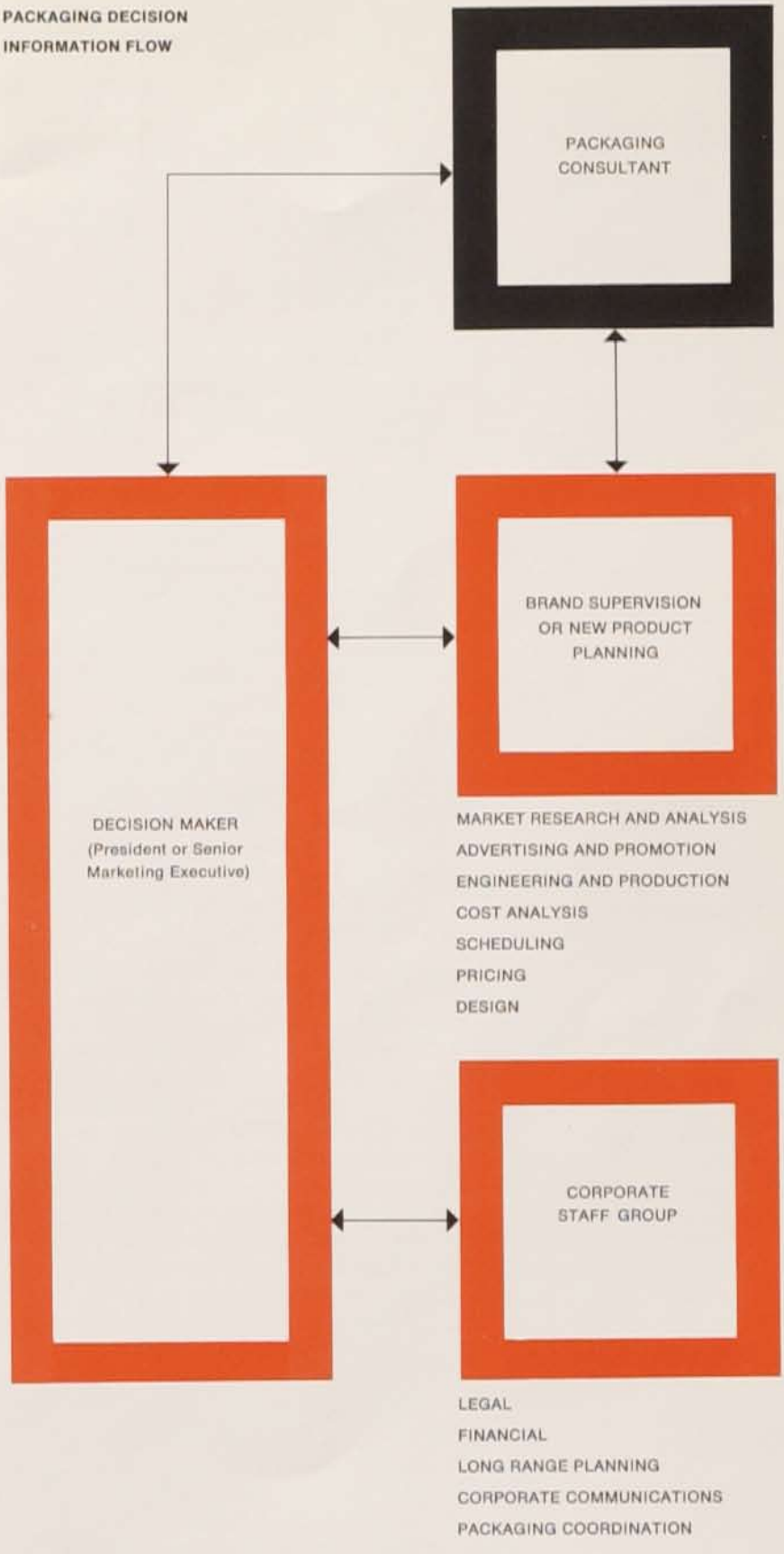
Packaging as Design

Producing the surface graphics for a new package, or revising those of an existing package, is considered by marketing newcomers to be the easiest problem to solve. Tell an artist exactly what you want and let him do it. It's as simple as that. Or difficult.

The problem centers about the difference between a package designer and a commercial artist. Both can draw; beyond that they represent two separate disciplines, with the designer trying to give his client long term recognition and memorability, and the commercial artist working toward short term stimulation and interest. Both are valuable; it is the combination of the immediate and the long range that simultaneously creates sales and builds brands.

Moreover, a blank package is not like an empty canvas on which an artist expresses his emotions. Metaphorically, it is a canvas on which the language of marketing is graphically translated. In this, packaging "art" is unique, and the understanding of this demonstrates one more difference between the two. Even the materials of the medium are unique. One must learn that graphics cannot be made to behave on

PACKAGING DECISION INFORMATION FLOW



The variety and depth of necessary knowledge has become so great—and the decision so important—that no single person is capable of making the packaging decision unaided.

plastic film or boxboard as they do on newsprint or a magazine's coated stock.

If the creation of the right good design were so simple, then it would be fair to ask why some ostensibly good designs fail miserably while others, which may take no design awards, perform admirably in the marketplace. The answer rests with the kind of training and marketing orientation the designer may have had—plus a hundred other things. If his understanding of packaging is limited, he has no business determining how your product should look in today's fiercely competitive market. Let him put what talent he may possess to another use.

In a sense, package design is like the design of the statue-in-the-park. That is to say, it's not ephemeral; it's meant to last. An individual ad, or even an ad campaign can be stopped or dropped, or changed—though admittedly it is expensive to do so—if it proves ineffective. A package, on the other hand, involves an even larger long term investment. It had better be right.

Packaging as Corporate Communications

A package can sell more than the product it surrounds. It can sell the corporation behind the product by contributing to its look of competence. Indeed, a package is often all the consumer ever perceives of a corporation.

This type of communication is a winding two-way street with few signs to guide the inexperienced. The brand can "sell" the corporation, in a sense. Strong corporate endorsement, by the same token, can sell the brand. The direction a manufacturer chooses to take is hardly a decision to be lightly made. Involved as it should be with corporate aims and long-range planning, it is not something that one leaves to an art director to determine. Nor is it really a subject that can be handled by a brand manager, an advertising agency or a packaging engineer—although all should be aware of the corporate position and the way it plans to move.

It is a curious anomaly of business management in the U.S. that many large firms have no idea how the public regards them or their brands. In some cases, studies have turned up quite the reverse of long and fondly held corporate beliefs. So, a corporation must learn how the public perceives it and determine whether this view is salutory, or what to do if it isn't, before deciding how the corporate name will be used on its brands. This can hardly be done by hunch or guesswork, nor by anyone uninitiated in research evaluation.

All of the foregoing should make plain that even the routine management of the packaging function requires a combination of skills of a high order. Moreover, the best packaging management is not a simple caretaker operation; it must be programmed for change, be creative, innovative and fact-and-figure oriented. Obviously, packaging management is demanding.

Who then should make the packaging decision? The variety and depth of necessary knowledge has become so great—and the decision so important—that no single person is capable of making the decision unaided.

Because of the differences between corporations, general rules—applicable to all—are hard to formulate. The size of company, type of product, and competitive position are only a few of the variables distinguishing one from another. And titles change as well as the executive function of those who carry the title. But to answer the question of who should make the packaging decision, one can imagine an "information flow system" that is broad enough to apply to many different corporations.

For simplicity's sake assume that information flows uphill and the final decision will be made at the top... ideally by the president... at a minimum by the senior marketing executive. Information input will flow from three directions: 1) The Corporate Staff Group which spells out overall corporate aims, legal and financial aspects, long range planning, corporate communications objectives and packaging coordination, 2) The Brand Supervisor or New Product Planner who assimilates necessary information from the market, coordinates advertising and promotion, engineering and production, cost analysis, scheduling, pricing and design, and, 3) The Packaging Consultant who specializes in packaging, who is close enough to the company to see and understand its problems but far enough out to be objective. He should also possess the breadth of knowledge that few individuals within a company have time to assimilate fully.

One qualification is necessary. The decision-making executive and the outside consultant cannot become involved only at the very end. In practice, this sometimes happens but it is a serious and costly error. Both must be involved at every step, from the initial planning stage to the finished packaged product. In this way, carefully structured for information and counsel, packaging management will be able to function optimally, ready to handle the broad spectrum of packaging decisions.

Readers of this issue of Design Sense will find the following of special interest:

Design Sense No. 51 — Overkill: Marketing's Most Expensive Mistake
Marketers squander great energy — and money — in communications overkill. Overkill is excessive force, greater than needed to attain marketing objectives. This issue studies the subject in depth and offers realistic alternatives to this costly marketing mistake.

Design Sense No. 46 — Ethnic Marketing Spoken Here
Strong appeals to special consumer groups have emerged as an important marketing tool to capture extra shares in today's intensely competitive situation. By surrounding a product with an ethnic aura — through packaging — marketers trade on the subtle but deep-felt loyalties of individual groups.

Design Sense No. 45 — Position Your Product/Sign Your Ad
Have you checked your positioning strategy lately? Positioning your brand or product or corporation requires a careful look at the market. Before you can determine how to boost sales, you have to know where you belong in the market, and have a strategy for getting there.

"Design for Marketing" — The Story of Lippincott & Margulies
Different business executives know the firm of Lippincott & Margulies to perform different important services. To some, L&M is a marketing consulting firm. To others, L&M is the foremost package designer. Still others know of L&M's industrial and interior designing. This cannot be counted strange since L&M is all of these things... and more. "Design for Marketing" was published to throw light on all the areas of L&M's expertise and to show how they interrelate. The firm's broad range of activities is described along with those of its affiliate companies, their unique design-marketing-communications services and creative techniques.

In addition to the above, a limited number of copies of Design Sense No. 53 — To Change or Not to Change Your Package — are still available.

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